

# Family makes birthday appeal for missing Martin

by Bernard Johnston

**THE father of missing Martin Kelly has made a fresh appeal for information about his son's disappearance on the anniversary of his birthday.**

Raymond Kelly says if people are too frightened to go to the police, they should talk in confidence to a church minister or priest.

Young Holywood man Martin would have celebrated his 24<sup>th</sup> birthday on Friday, March 14.

But tragically, he disappeared without a trace on January 1, 2006 after celebrating the New Year with friends in Pat's Bar in Belfast's Clarendon Docks.

Dad Raymond believes someone may have information about what happened to his son that night and for some reason has still not come forward.

He said: "Maybe the person is frightened because it has been so long since Martin disappeared.

"But I would urge them that if they don't want to go to the police, they could go to their local clergyman or priest and tell them what they know.

"The minister or priest could then pass the information onto the police so it can be investigated, or even to myself.

"It is not too late to come forward. If someone knows something about what happened to Martin they should use these channels available to them.

"I would be extremely grateful for any help they

can give me or the police in tracing Martin's whereabouts."

Raymond's appeal has been echoed by the PSNI who this week said that the team searching for Martin Kelly would follow up all fresh leads.

A spokesman said: "Police remain committed and determined to discovering what happened to Martin and to bringing closure to his family.

"The detectives will continue to follow up all new lines of enquiry and any new information.

"Anyone who believes that they can assist police or anyone with information who has not yet come forward is asked to contact the detectives at Musgrave Street on 0845 600 8000."

Martin's dad has still not given up hope of finding his son's body despite the passage of time.

Last December, he called on the PSNI to search a Victorian storm drain for his son's remains.

The drain, which travels all the way up to north Belfast, had been searched before but only at the entrance.

Following his appeals that search was carried out by the police to see if Martin's body had become trapped there, but nothing was found.

Last year, a 'fully independent review' of the investigation into tracing Martin Kelly was carried out.

The team of detectives and experts reported that at this stage the inquiry team had 'exhausted' all investigative and search opportunities.

Martin Kelly, an apprentice plumber, was last seen when he left

Pat's Bar at about 7.15pm, possibly intending to return to his Holywood home.

But despite exhaustive searches and a publicity campaign in Northern Ireland, mainland Britain and the Republic, police and his family have been unable to unearth any clues as to what happened to him.

The family are desperate to know if (a) he fell into the docks and tragically drowned or (b) lost his memory after innocently getting injured or attacked.

His mum Karen, who has now moved to Galway to start a new life near her daughter, also carried out a month-long search in England, Scotland and Wales.

She visited 14 cities across the mainland to have his case publicised in the local media, including radio interviews.

However, the family's relentless campaign to discover what happened to him is yet to bring any clues.

\* Anyone with information can also send it to the campaign website: [www.ourmartykelly.com](http://www.ourmartykelly.com)

